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UNCLAS ROME 001011

SIPDIS

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 ROME 001011

SIPDIS

FROM AMEMBASSY ROME

GENEVA FOR RMA FOR NANCE KYLOH
BRUSSELS FOR KFULLER AND KDEBLAUW
NSC FOR JDWORKEN
USAID FOR A, DCHA, OFDA, FFP
STATE FOR AF, IO, DAS/PRM
USDA FOR FAS/EC/PDD TILLSWORTH AND
FAS/ICD KRMAER, LEBLANC
USUN FOR LSHESTACK
NAIROBI FOR REDSO AND OFDA/ARO

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SUBJECT: LIBERIA: INSECURITY COUPLED WITH FOOD SECURITY FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND REFUGEES

SUMMARY

¶1. USAID STAFF FROM THE U.S. MISSION IN ROME AND FOOD FOR PEACE/WASHINGTON TRAVELED TO GUINEA, SIERRA LEONE, AND LIBERIA JANUARY 27 THROUGH FEBRUARY 7 TO REVIEW THE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION FOR REFUGEES, INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS), AND RESIDENTS OF THESE COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY INFUXES OF EITHER GROUP. THIS REPORT FOCUSES ON LIBERIA SOLELY. SIERRA LEONE AND GUINEA ARE REPORTED IN SEPTELS.

¶2. FOR THE LAST YEAR IN LIBERIA, PEOPLE FROM THE NORTHERN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY HAVE SUFFERED DISPLACEMENT FROM THEIR HOMES. IN THE LAST MONTH, THE PACE OF DISPLACEMENTS HAS INTENSIFIED, WITH SOME PEOPLE NOW BEING DISPLACED FOR THE FOURTH TIME. IT IS UNCLEAR WHICH ORGANIZATIONS OR GROUPS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CAUSING THE DISPLACEMENT. THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY IS ENCOUNTERING OBSTACLES IN TRYING TO ACCESS SOME OF THE DISPLACED AND TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE. A UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE/HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR IS DESPERATELY NEEDED IN LIBERIA TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THE IDPS, AND WFP NEEDS TO EXPEDITE THE PLACEMENT OF ITS COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE. THE U.N. FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION (FAO) MUST CONTINUE TO PUSH THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL AUTHORITIES TO PROVIDE PARCELS OF LAND TO THE IDPS AND REFUGEES SO THEY CAN FARM. THE U.N. WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS ARE GOING WELL, BUT NEED TO INCORPORATE MORE WOMEN INTO THE WORK. NO POST-DISTRIBUTION FOOD MONITORING HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS SINCE DECEMBER 2000 AND WAS NEVER BEGUN IN THE IDP CAMPS. THIS TASK NEEDS TO BE REINSTATED. CONTINGENCY PLANNING MEASURES HAVE JUST BEGUN. NGOS AND U.N. AGENCIES HAVE LITTLE SUPPORT FROM THE DONOR COMMUNITY AND MORALE IS LOW. THE FOOD PIPELINE FOR LIBERIA IS DUE TO BREAK IN JULY 2002. NEW DONATIONS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED. SEE PARA 35 FOR RECOMMENDATIONS.
END SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

¶3. JANUARY 27 THROUGH FEBRUARY 7, SENIOR EMERGENCY COORDINATOR (SEC) IN THE U.S. MISSION/ROME REGINA DAVIS AND DALE SKORIC, USAID/DCHA/FOOD FOR PEACE OFFICER (FFPO), TRAVELED TO LIBERIA, GUINEA, AND SIERRA LEONE TO REVIEW THE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION FOR REFUGEES, INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS), AND RESIDENTS WHOSE COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY INFUXES OF EITHER GROUP. WFP'S DEPUTY FOR THE WEST AFRICA REGION, ARNOLD VERCKEN, ACCOMPANIED THE USAID TEAM TO ALL THREE COUNTRIES.

¶4. IN LIBERIA JANUARY 31 THROUGH FEBRUARY 2, THE TEAM MET WITH WFP/LIBERIA, FAO, THE U.N. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), THE U.N. SECURITY OFFICER, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS), GOL OFFICIALS, AND VISITED IDP CAMPS IN BONG COUNTY AND KLAY JUNCTION, AS WELL AS THE SINJE REFUGEE CAMPS, LOCATED VERY CLOSE TO PUJEHUN DISTRICT OF SIERRA LEONE.

15. INTERNAL DISPLACEMENTS BEGAN IN LIBERIA ONE YEAR AGO IN FEBRUARY, WHEN TOWNS IN UPPER LOFA COUNTY WERE THE TARGETS OF SPORADIC FIGHTING AND CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY FROM GUINEA AND SIERRA LEONE. THE IDENTITY OF THE PERPETRATORS OF THE ATTACKS WAS UNCLEAR. THE IDPS FLED EAST AND SOUTH AND SETTLED IN BONG COUNTY IN MAY, IN ONE OF FOUR CAMPS: CARI I AND II, TV TOWER, AND BELEFANAI. CURRENTLY, THESE ARE THE ONLY IDP CAMPS RECOGNIZED BY THE GOL. LAST SUMMER ADDITIONAL OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE OCCURRED IN GBARPOLU COUNTY (FORMERLY KNOWN AS LOWER LOFA COUNTY) AND AGAIN IN LOFA COUNTY. NEW IDPS GROUPED AT JENEMENA AND BOPOLU. THOSE CAMPS SUBSEQUENTLY EMPTIED LAST FALL WITH THEIR INHABITANTS FLEEING FURTHER SOUTH.

16. ON SATURDAY NIGHT, JANUARY 26, CAMP POPULATIONS IN SAW MILL, LOCATED IN WESTERN LIBERIA, ACCCOMPANIED BY THE TOWNSPEOPLE OF TUBMANBERG (ALSO KNOWN AS BOMI HILLS) FLED TOWARDS KLAY JUNCTION. BECAUSE THE MOVEMENT OCCURRED DURING THE NIGHT AND WAS EXTREMELY RUSHED, MANY ARRIVED WITH VERY LITTLE. THE EXACT IMPETUS FOR FLIGHT IS AGAIN UNCLEAR OTHER THAN THE STATED SOUND OF GUNFIRE. THE TEAM VISITED KLAY JUNCTION ON FEBRUARY 2 AND TALKED WITH IDPS, WHERE ABOUT 9,000 HAD GATHERED. FIVE DAYS LATER, ON FEBRUARY 7, KLAY JUNCTION WAS ATTACKED, FORCING THE RECENT ARRIVALS TO TAKE FLIGHT ONCE AGAIN--THE FOURTH TIME FOR SOME. MOST FLED TOWARDS MONROVIA.

SITES OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

17. AT LEAST 28,500 IDPS ACCOMMODATED IN THE FOUR CAMPS IN BONG COUNTY (SEE PARA 5 ABOVE) RECEIVE MONTHLY FOOD ASSISTANCE FROM WFP. THE OPERATION HAS BEEN ONGOING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, AND THUS FAR, HAS BEEN RUNNING QUITE SMOOTHLY. DURING THE TEAM'S VISIT, THERE WERE REPORTS OF AN ADDITIONAL 5,291 IDPS THAT HAD ACCUMULATED NEAR THE TOWN OF GBONOTA, WEST OF BELAFANAI. THERE WERE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF OTHER SMALL GROUPINGS OF IDPS IN OTHER VILLAGES CLOSE TO GBONOTA, AND IT WAS THOUGHT THERE WERE ADDITIONAL IDPS NORTH OF THE LARGE GROUP MOVING SOUTH. THE NGOS AND U.N. AGENCIES WERE BEING DENIED ACCESS TO THESE NEW POPULATIONS; THE IDP FIGURE CAME FROM A CONCERNED CITIZEN WHO HAD DECIDED TO REGISTER THEM. THERE WERE ALSO REPORTS THAT GOVERNMENT TROOPS HAVE BEEN PREVENTING IDPS FROM CONGREGATING IN OR TRAVELLING IN LARGE NUMBERS. IN THE PREVIOUS THREE WEEKS, CARI I AND II HAD ABSORBED MORE THAN 1,000 IDPS. ACTION CONTRE LA FAIM (ACF) AND MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES (MSF) ARE WORKING IN THE TWO CAMPS.

18. ADDITIONAL GROUPINGS OF IDPS LOCATED AT KLAY JUNCTION, SINJE REFUGEE CAMP, AND IN HAINDII AS OF FEBRUARY 2 WERE ESTIMATED TO TOTAL 14,300. GIVEN RECENT ATTACKS, IT IS BELIEVED THIS NUMBER HAS RISEN.

19. IT IS UNKNOWN WHERE THE GOVERNMENT'S LIBERIA REFUGEE, REPATRIATION AND RESETTLEMENT COMMISSION (LRRRC) WILL RESETTLE THE NEWLY DISPLACED RECENTLY PASSING THROUGH KLAY JUNCTION AND POINTS ONWARDS. THERE IS DISCUSSION OF PUTTING THEM INTO AN OLD CAMP IN A SUBURB OF MONROVIA KNOWN AS PERRY TOWN. IDPS IN HAINDII AND GBONOTA (LOCATED IN BONG COUNTY) MAY BE ACCOMMODATED IN THE CURRENT FOUR IDP CAMPS IN THE BONG AREA, OR IN AN ALTERNATIVE SITE THAT ACCOMMODATED REFUGEES DURING THE EARLY 1990S, NEAR THE TOWN OF TOTATA. THE LATTER IS NOT PREFERRED BY WFP OR OTHER NGOS DUE TO ITS DISTANCE FROM THE CURRENT LOGISTICS SET-UP IN THE BONG AREA AND POOR ROAD ACCESS.

LIMITATIONS IMPOSED ON THE IDPS

10. THE GOL MINISTER OF PLAN TOLD THE USAID TEAM THAT THE IDPS IN BONG COUNTY HAD ACCESS TO LAND FOR PLANTING. HOWEVER, WHEN THE TEAM ARRIVED IN THE BONG CAMPS, THE AMOUNT OF LAND AVAILABLE TO THE IDPS SEEMED TO BE QUITE SMALL. CARI I AND II CAMPS ARE LOCATED AT THE SITE OF THE ONCE-FUNCTIONING AGRICULTURAL STATION AND THE IDPS ARE FARMING SOME BITS OF LAND HERE AND THERE INSIDE THE CAMP. THE LRRRC HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN NEGOTIATING WITH THE LAND OWNERS TO PROVIDE PARCELS OF LAND TO THE IDPS FOR FARMING, BUT ITS EFFORTS HAVE YIELDED LITTLE PROGRESS THUS FAR.

11. WFP SHOULD WORK CLOSELY WITH FAO TO FOLLOW UP ON THE ACCESSIBILITY OF FARMLAND TO IDPS IN BONG COUNTY. IF IT IS FOUND THAT LAND HAS NOT BEEN PROVIDED TO THE

IDPS IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES, WHICH THE USAID TEAM STRONGLY SUSPECTS, FAO SHOULD LOBBY STRONGLY WITH THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL AUTHORITIES TO ATTAIN THE NECESSARY LAND. DISCUSSIONS ARE UNDERWAY; IT IS JUST NOT CLEAR HOW SOLID THE COMMITMENTS HAVE BEEN. AS THE PLANTING SEASON FOR THE MAIN RICE CROP BEGINS IN MAY, THE NEED TO SOLIDIFY COMMITMENTS IS CRITICAL. THE TEAM MADE THIS POINT WITH THE FAO REPRESENTATIVE BEFORE ITS DEPARTURE. FAO IS IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING AN EMERGENCY PROJECT TO PROVIDE SEED RICE, ASSORTED VEGETABLE AND GROUNDNUTS SEED, AND CASSAVA PLANTING MATERIALS TO IDP FAMILIES IN BONG COUNTY.

¶12. IN ADDITION, THE LOCAL POPULATION IN BONG IS DEVELOPING HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE IDPS, AS IT WAS REPORTED THAT LOCALS HAD RECENTLY TAKEN 50 MACHETES FROM THE IDPS IN AN EFFORT TO STOP THE IDPS FROM CUTTING DOWN TREES. THE U.N. SECURITY OFFICER ALSO TOLD THE TEAM THAT THE GOL SECURITY FORCES IN THE AREA, OF WHICH THERE ARE SEVERAL VARIETIES, SEVERELY RESTRICT FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT OF THE IDPS OUTSIDE THE CAMP, ESPECIALLY THE MEN. IF A PERSON WANTS TO TRAVEL FAR FROM THE CAMP, IT MUST BE DONE CLANDESTINELY. THE TEAM ALSO HEARD REPORTS OF IDPS BEING BEATEN WHO WERE FOUND OUTSIDE THE CAMP. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT TAYLOR'S FARM IS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO CARI AND TV TOWER CAMPS.

¶13. AS BONG AND LOFA COUNTIES ARE CONSIDERED THE BREAD BASKETS FOR THE COUNTRY, THE UPROOTING OF THE POPULATION IN THESE TWO COUNTIES WILL MOST LIKELY HAVE LONG-TERM RAMIFICATIONS ON THE FOOD SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY. ALL EFFORTS NEED TO BE MADE TO DIMINISH THE IMPACT TO ENSURE THE COUNTRY DOES NOT SLIP BACK INTO FOOD AID DEPENDENCY.

LACK OF ACCESS TO NEW IDPS

¶14. AS STATED IN PARA 7 ABOVE, THE GOL HAS BEEN DENYING ACCESS TO NEWLY DISPLACED POPULATIONS, UNDER THE RUBRIC OF SECURITY, SAYING THE GOL IS RETRIEVING STOLEN ASSETS OR THE AREA IS TOO INSECURE TO ALLOW HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES ACCESS. IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS, THE GOL SECURITY FORCES ALSO REPORTEDLY PREVENTED MOVEMENT OF IDPS FROM THE BOPOLU AND GBARPOLU CAMPS TO AREAS FURTHER SOUTH. THE IDPS DESIRED TO RELOCATE BECAUSE OF RUMORS OF THE FRONT LINES MOVING THEIR WAY. THESE ACTIONS, OF COURSE, VIOLATE THE TENETS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW. THE NGOS AND U.N. AGENCIES ARE EXTREMELY FRUSTRATED BY THE GOL'S POLICIES AND FEEL THEY ARE BEING MANIPULATED. THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE DILEMMA BETWEEN THE GOL'S HESITANCY/UNWILLINGNESS TO ESTABLISH CAMPS AND THEIR DESIRE TO TRY TO ASSIST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.

¶15. COORDINATION MEETINGS CHAIRED BY THE LRRRC ARE TAKING PLACE IN MONROVIA. THE USAID TEAM MET WITH ITS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SAMUEL BROWN, AND MET MANY LRRRC STAFF WHILE MAKING CAMP VISITS. ALTHOUGH LRRRC STAFF SEEM TO BE MAKING AN HONEST EFFORT TO ASSIST THE IDPS, THE TEAM WAS TROUBLED TO LEARN THAT THE LRRRC FALLS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE (MOJ). THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE SERVES AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT SECURITY COMMISSION THAT MAKES THE DECISIONS REGARDING ACCESS. THE TEAM FOUND THIS TO BE A SERIOUS CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR THE PLIGHT OF THE IDPS. ANY DECISION RELATED TO HUMANITARIAN ACCESS IS DEPENDENT UPON THE MOJ, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, THE LRRRC IS SUPPOSEDLY LOBBYING ITS BOSS FOR ACCESS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CAMPS. THUS FAR, THE GOL HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO ESTABLISH IDP CAMPS NEAR MONROVIA.

FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS FOR THE IDPS

¶16. WFP'S IMPLEMENTING PARTNER IN BONG COUNTY FOR THE DISTRIBUTIONS IS THE LIBERIAN NATIONAL RED CROSS (LNRC). THERAPEUTIC AND SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING IS PROVIDED BY ACF, TARGETING APPROXIMATELY 450 MALNOURISHED IDP CHILDREN. WFP PROVIDES THE FOOD COMMODITIES TO ACF. WFP HAS DETERMINED THAT THE IDPS IN BONG COUNTY HAVE SOME COPING MECHANISMS AND ARE THEREFORE PROVIDED WITH A GENERAL MONTHLY RATION OF APPROXIMATELY 1,800 KILOCALORIES (KC) PER DAY PER BENEFICIARY, RATHER THAN THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD OF 2,100 KC.

¶17. THE TEAM WAS RATHER SURPRISED TO FIND THAT REGISTERED IDPS RECEIVE RATIONS USING THE CLUSTER METHOD, WHEREBY A GROUP LEADER RECEIVES THE FOOD ON BEHALF OF HIS/HER GROUP AND FOOD COMMODITIES ARE

DIVIDED AMONG THE GROUP. A GROUP IS COMPOSED OF SEVERAL FAMILIES, UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 17 FAMILIES. WFP HAD BEEN SCOOPING SEPARATELY TO FAMILIES, BUT IN JANUARY DECIDED TO SWITCH TO THE CLUSTER METHOD. (NOTE: INTERESTINGLY, WFP/GUINEA HAS JUST MADE THE OPPOSITE SWITCH BECAUSE OF THE FRAUD THAT HAD BEEN TAKING PLACE USING THE CLUSTER METHOD IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN GUINEA. END NOTE.)

¶18. IN STABLE SITUATIONS WHERE THERE IS REASONABLE SOCIAL COHESION, THE CLUSTER SYSTEM USUALLY WORKS WELL AND CAN BE VERY EFFECTIVE AND INEXPENSIVE. HOWEVER, IT REQUIRES TRAINING AND SUPERVISION. FOLLOWING A DISTRIBUTION ASSESSMENT BY THE SEC AND FFPO IN BONG, THIS DOES NOT SEEM TO BE THE CASE. WHILE NOT CHAOTIC, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER ACTUAL DISTRIBUTIONS ARE MADE ACCORDING TO HOUSEHOLD SIZE OR IF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING THEIR ENTITLEMENTS. THE USAID TEAM RAISED ITS RESERVATIONS ABOUT THIS SYSTEM WITH WFP, AND THE WFP ACTING COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE PROMISED TO REVIEW ITS EFFECTIVENESS FOLLOWING THE MARCH DISTRIBUTION AND REPORT TO THE TEAM.

¶19. FOR ACCOUNTABILITY PURPOSES, THE PRESENCE OF MONITORS DURING DISTRIBUTION NEEDS TO BE AUGMENTED, POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING NEEDS TO BE INITIATED, AND REGULAR REPORTING NEEDS TO SYSTEMATIZED. AT THE SAME TIME, NEW BENEFICIARY CARDS, POSSIBLY LAMINATED, NEED TO BE ISSUED AS THE CURRENT ONES ARE OLD AND ARE DETERIORATING.

¶20. IT WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE TEAM THAT WOMEN WERE NOT EQUALLY REPRESENTED AS GROUP LEADERS NOR AS HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS ON BENEFICIARY LISTS. WFP NEEDS TO ENSURE THAT GENDER CONSIDERATIONS FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN ITS FOOD ASSISTANCE TO IDPS. TO WFP'S CREDIT, THIS UNDER-REPRESENTATION WAS ALSO ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO WFP'S WEST AFRICA REGIONAL DEPUTY, VERCKEN, WHO POINTEDLY CLARIFIED WFP'S GENDER POLICY TO THE LIBERIA WFP TEAM. WFP AND ITS IPS NEED TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN WHO ARE SERVING AND ARE RECEIVING THE FOOD INrecognition OF THEIR ROLE IN HOUSEHOLD FOOD MANAGEMENT.

¶21. TO LOWER THE LIKELIHOOD THAT NEWLY DISPLACED RESIDING OUTSIDE OF GOL-RECOGNIZED CAMPS WILL BE ATTACKED, WFP HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTING WEEKLY FOOD RATIONS TO NEW IDPS, WHEN POSSIBLE, UNTIL THEY CAN BE RELOCATED TO MORE SECURE SITES. ONCE THEY ARE RELOCATED TO A SECURE SITE, FOOD RATIONS WILL BE REGULARIZED AND PROVIDED MONTHLY BY WFP, AS THEY ARE FOR IDPS LOCATED IN THE FOUR CAMPS IN BONG COUNTY. REMOTE AREAS AND DIFFICULT CONDITIONS MAY REQUIRE THAT ASSISTANCE BE PROVIDED TO NEWLY DISPLACED BEFORE DETAILED NEEDS ASSESSMENTS CAN BE COMPLETED, AS FOOD WILL REMAIN A HIGH PRIORITY. SUCH AN INITIAL RESPONSE WOULD NOT OBVIATE THE NEED FOR SUCH AN ASSESSMENT AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE TIME, HOWEVER.

REFUGEE OPERATIONS

¶22. WFP CURRENTLY PROVIDES FOOD ASSISTANCE TO APPROXIMATELY 38,000 SIERRA LEONEAN REFUGEES WHO ARE ACCOMMODATED IN SIX CAMPS - SINJE 1 & 2 ALONG THE SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA BORDER IN GRAND CAPE MOUNT COUNTY AND FOUR CAMPS IN MONTSERRADO COUNTY NEAR MONROVIA.

¶23. WFP, THROUGH THE LIBERIAN ISLAMIC UNION FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (LIURD), PROVIDES A RATION OF APPROXIMATELY 1,800 KC PER DAY PER REFUGEE. DISTRIBUTIONS TO THE REFUGEES ARE ALSO USING THE CLUSTER SYSTEM (SEE PARA 17 ABOVE). THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM WAS RECENTLY CHANGED FROM SCOOPING TO CLUSTERS BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BENEFICIARIES THEMSELVES TO THE REFUGEES' CENTRAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CMC) COMPOSED OF REFUGEES.

¶24. BOTH WFP AND UNHCR SEEM COMFORTABLE WITH THE NEW DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND THE USAID TEAM GOT A VERY POSITIVE RESPONSE WHEN IT ASKED THE CMC IF THE WEAKEST IN THE CAMP WERE RECEIVING THEIR RATIONS. AT THIS POINT HOWEVER, THERE IS NO WAY OF REALLY KNOWING IF THE MOST VULNERABLE REFUGEES/HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVE THEIR ENTITLEMENTS BECAUSE NO POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING (PDM) HAS BEEN DONE SINCE DECEMBER 2000. THIS POSES SOME SERIOUS CONCERNs TO THE USAID TEAM. IT WAS RECOMMENDED THAT PDM BE REINSTATED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND THAT INDEPENDENT MONITORING BY WFP AND NGO PARTNERS DURING AND AFTER DISTRIBUTION BE IMPROVED. WHILE THE GLOBAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN WFP AND UNHCR DOES NOT

SPECIFICALLY STATE THAT A TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT IN THE CHOICE OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS (IPS) FOR PDM IS REQUIRED, THE TEAM RECOMMENDED THAT IN LINE WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE MOU, A JOINT AGREEMENT SHOULD BE REACHED SOON IN CHOOSING AN IP FOR PDM.

¶25. AS WITH THE IDP FOOD DISTRIBUTION, IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT WOMEN WERE NEITHER EQUALLY REPRESENTED AS GROUP DISTRIBUTORS NOR AS HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS ON BENEFICIARY LISTS. AGAIN, WFP AND LIURD NEED TO ENSURE THAT GENDER CONSIDERATIONS FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN ITS FOOD ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES.

¶26. AN EARLIER SURVEY BY UNHCR HAD SHOWN THAT UP TO 70% OF THE SINJE REFUGEE POPULATION MAY WISH TO RETURN TO SIERRA LEONE. WITH THE RECENT ATTACKS ON KLAY JUNCTION, THE DESIRE TO REPATRIATE TO SIERRA LEONE SOONER RATHER THAN LATER HAS INCREASED. THOSE PROVIDED WITH FOOD ASSISTANCE IN JANUARY IN SINJE I AND II TOTALLED 16,280. ON FEBRUARY 4, UNHCR STARTED AN ACCELERATED REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR THOSE REFUGEES WHO MAY WISH TO RETURN TO SIERRA LEONE.

¶27. FOR THOSE REFUGEES WHO CHOOSE TO REMAIN IN LIBERIA, FAO AND WFP SHOULD JOINTLY UNDERTAKE AN ASSESSMENT TO EXAMINE COPING MECHANISMS, ASSET LEVELS AND FACTORS AFFECTING ACCESS TO FOOD AND LOCAL LAND FOR THE RESIDUAL REFUGEE POPULATION. THE RESULTS MAY INFLUENCE THE LEVEL OR TYPE OF FOOD ASSISTANCE REQUIRED FOR THIS CASELOAD.

STAFFING

¶28. ALTHOUGH THE WFP SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER IS DOING A FINE JOB AS THE ACTING WFP COUNTRY DIRECTOR IN LIBERIA, WFP NEEDS TO PLACE A MORE SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE IN THE COUNTRY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

MORALE OF THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

¶29. THE USAID TEAM WAS QUITE TAKEN WITH THE LOW MORALE OF THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY. THE U.N. COUNTRY TEAM AND THE NGOS SEEM TO BE COMPLETELY DEMORALIZED FROM LACK OF FUNDING, LACK OF DONOR INTEREST, LACK OF ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS, AND NOW BY THE DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION COUPLED WITH THE ONGOING DIFFICULTY OF WORKING WITH THE GOVERNMENT. WITH THAT SAID, HOWEVER, THE LEVEL OF COMPETENCE AMONG THE WFP, FAO, AND UNHCR IS QUITE ACCEPTABLE, AND THE USAID TEAM ENCOURAGED THEM TO CONTINUE TO PUSH THE GOVERNMENT ON HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES. LACK OF VISITORS AND DONOR SUPPORT DO HAVE THEIR EFFECT, HOWEVER, IN HOW ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND AGGRESSIVELY THEY APPROACH THEIR WORK.

¶30. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THERE IS NO/NO UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE/HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR IN LIBERIA TO WORK WITH THE GOL IN ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OF THE IDPS. THE U.N. PROPOSED TWO CANDIDATES WHO WERE BOTH REJECTED BY THE GOL. A THIRD HAS NOW BEEN APPROVED. THE NEED FOR THE SWIFT ARRIVAL OF THE NEW RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE AT THIS PERILOUS MOMENT CANNOT BE OVERSTATED.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

¶31. DURING THE SEC'S AND FFPO'S VISIT, IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT THERE IS A TREMENDOUS NEED FOR CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS AS THE CURRENT CRISIS DEEPENS AND POPULATION DISPLACEMENT INCREASES. IT WAS RECOMMENDED TO THE UN COUNTRY TEAM THAT CONTINGENCY PLANNING MEASURES BE UNDERTAKEN IMMEDIATELY TO ENSURE READINESS FOR POTENTIAL EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND AN ABILITY TO COPE WITH A VARIETY OF SCENARIOS. AN ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND AN EXAMINATION OF RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS SHOULD BE INCLUDED. SUBSEQUENT TO THE TEAM'S VISIT, THE U.N. OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (OCHA) DEPLOYED AN OFFICER TO LIBERIA TO BEGIN THE CONTINGENCY PLANNING PROCESS.

FOOD SECURITY FORUM

¶32. AN INTER-AGENCY FOOD SECURITY FORUM (FSF) HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN MONROVIA WITH THE AIM TO DEVELOP COMMON APPROACHES TO FOOD INTERVENTIONS, FOOD

SECURITY ASSESSMENTS AND MONITORING. THE FSF MEETS ON A MONTHLY BASIS WITH A ROTATING CHAIR OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS. GIVEN THE CURRENT IN-COUNTRY SITUATION, THE FSF WILL PROVIDE A GOOD VENUE IN WHICH TO PLAN, TARGET, AND EVALUATE EMERGENCY FOOD INTERVENTIONS AND SHOULD BE SUPPORTED AS SUCH.

PIPELINE

133. UNDER ITS CURRENT PRRO, WFP/LIBERIA REQUIRES 25,637 METRIC TONS (MT) FOOD AID TO PROVIDE TARGETED FOOD ASSISTANCE TO A MONTHLY AVERAGE OF 108,550 BENEFICIARIES (JANUARY - DECEMBER 2002). FY 2002 USAID/DCHA/FFP TITLE II EMERGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS TO LIBERIA CURRENTLY AMOUNT TO 2,650 MT FOOD COMMODITIES OR 1.4 MILLION USD, REPRESENTING ABOUT 10 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL PRRO FOOD REQUIREMENTS. WFP/LIBERIA FACES AN 83 PERCENT SHORTFALL OF ITS TOTAL FOOD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR 2002. AS IS, THE WFP/LIBERIA PIPELINE WILL START TO RUN DRY AS OF JULY 2002. ADDITIONAL DONATIONS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED.

LOGISTICS

134. SINCE 2001 WFP HAS REDUCED ITS TRANSPORT, STORAGE AND HANDLING (ITSH) RATE FOR LIBERIA BY USD 7 PER MT. IT IS HOPED THAT GIVEN THE WFP REGIONAL LOGISTICS EXERCISE TO BE CONDUCTED IN MARCH 2002 THAT THE ITSH RATE COULD BE REDUCED FURTHER. THIS TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION THE REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF NATIONAL LOGISTICS STAFF, THE POSSIBLE CLOSURE OF THE EDP LOCATED IN HARPER, AND THE PARTIAL RELEASE OF THE WFP DEDICATED FLEET NOW OPERATIONAL OUT OF THE PORT OF MONROVIA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

135. RECOMMENDATIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- THE U.N. NEEDS TO SPEED THE DEPLOYMENT OF A STRONG UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE/HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR WHO CAN SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE IDPS WITH THE GOL. A WHOLE RANGE OF HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES REGARDING THE IDPS ARE IN QUESTION.

- WFP SHOULD DO ALL IT CAN TO SEE THAT THE PROPOSED COUNTRY DIRECTOR BE APPROVED POST-HASTE BY THE GOL SO HE CAN BE DEPLOYED SOONEST.

- WFP NEEDS TO DEVELOP A CLEAR POLICY ABOUT WHEN AND HOW IT PROVIDES FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS TO NEWLY-DISPLACED POPULATIONS. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE SHARED WITH ALL RELEVANT PARTIES.

- GIVEN CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS, WFP SHOULD CONTINUE TO IMPROVE ITS STRATEGIES AS THE LEAD AGENCY FOR FOOD COORDINATION REGARDING THE EMERGENCY SITUATION AND CONTINUE TO BASE ITS INTERVENTIONS ON PROFESSIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION ASSESSMENTS INVOLVING OTHER ORGANIZATIONS. IN THIS REGARD, THE FOLLOWING NEEDS TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS:

1A. POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING NEEDS TO BE REINSTATED IMMEDIATELY IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS, GUIDED BY A TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT AMONG WFP, UNHCR, AND THE IP. WFP SHOULD BEGIN PDM IN THE IDP CAMPS, AS WELL.

1B. WOMEN NEED TO BECOME A MORE INTEGRAL PART OF THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS.

1C. USE OF MONITORS DURING THE DISTRIBUTION NEEDS TO BE INCREASED.

1D. THE CLUSTER METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION NEEDS TO BE ANALYZED AFTER THREE TO FOUR MONTHS OF USE IN THE IDP AND REFUGEE CAMPS TO ENSURE THAT THE WEAKEST AND MOST VULNERABLE ARE RECEIVING THE INTENDED RATION.

1E. WFP NEEDS TO CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT TO EXAMINE COPING MECHANISMS, ASSET LEVELS, AND FACTORS AFFECTING ACCESS TO FOOD AND LOCAL LAND FOR THE IDPS IN BONG COUNTY AND FOR THE REFUGEES. APPROPRIATE ADJUSTMENTS TO THE RATION LEVEL SHOULD THEN BE IMPLEMENTED.

- FAO SHOULD LOBBY STRONGLY WITH THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE LAND FOR AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION FOR THE IDPS IN BONG COUNTY AND REMAINING REFUGEES IN SINJE IS PROVIDED. AS THE PLANTING

SEASON FOR THE MAIN RICE CROP BEGINS IN MAY, MOVING SWIFTLY WITH SOLID AGREEMENTS IS CRITICAL.

- A DEMARCHE TO KEY DONORS HIGHLIGHTING THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN LIBERIA MIGHT BE HELPFUL IN FILLING THE ANTICIPATED PIPELINE BREAK IN JULY.

136. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. HEILEMAN